

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 OMB-01 PC-01 AID-05 CU-02 IO-10

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OC-05

CCO-00 SCCT-01 /091 W

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9391

INFO AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

CINCPAC HONOLULU

DIA WASHDC

COSMUSMACTHAI BANGKOK

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 16510

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, TH

SUBJECT: STUDENT SYMPATHY RALLY OVER ARRESTS OF NORTHERN ACTIVISTS

REF: BANGKOK 16355

SUMMARY. THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT IS CONFIDENT THAT IT CAN DEFUSE THE STUDENT RALLY AT THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY WHICH PROTESTS THE ARRESTS OF FARMER AND STUDENT ACTIVISTS IN LAMPHUN PROVINCE. THE RALLY ITSELF HAS BEEN GATHERING GOOD CROWDS DURING THE DAYTIME BUT ADFOURNING DURING THE EVENING HOURS, INDICATING THAT THE ORGANIZERS MAY NOT HAVE STRUCK A SYMPATHETIC CHORD. END SUMMARY.

1. THE SECRETARY TO FINANCE MINISTER BUNCHU ROTCHANASATHIAN TOLD AN ECONOMIC OFFICER AUGUST 8 THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS CONFIDENT THAT IT CAN DEFUSE THE STUDENT RALLY AT THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY WHICH WAS CALLED IN SUPPORT OF THE NINE FARMER AND STUDENT ACTIVISTS
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ARRESTED IN LAMPHUN PROVINCE ON AUGUST 3. THE

SECRETARY FELT THAT THE STUDENTS WERE NOT RECEIVING BROAD SUPPORT AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD EVERYTHING UNDER CONTROL.

2. IN A MOVE TO COUNTER THE PUBLICITY GIVEN THE THAMMASAT RALLY, THE RTG ISSUED AN EXTENSIVE PUBLIC STATEMENT. THE STATEMENT POINTED OUT THAT THE POLICE HAD MADE ARRESTS IN MURDER CASES INVOLVING FARMERS' FEDERATION OF THAILAND VICTIMS. IT ALSO GAVE A DETAILED ACCOUNTING OF THE INCIDENT IN LAMPHUN PROVINCE FOR WHICH THE NINE ACTIVISTS WERE ARRESTED.

3. THE RTG'S AGGRESSIVE PUBLICITY COUNTERATTACK, WITH FACTS AND FIGURES, WILL GO FAR IN ASSURING THE PUBLIC THAT THE RTG IS DOING ITS BEST. SUCH AN ASTUTE PROPAGANDA MOVE ON THE GOVERNMENT'S PART DEMONSTRATES ONE OF THE NEW SKILLS THAT KHUKRIT HAS BROUGHT TO THE GOVERNMENT AND ONE WHICH HAS RAISED HIM TO HIS PRESENT POPULARITY HEIGHTS.

4. THE STUDENT ACTIVIST RALLY AT THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY WAS WELL ATTENDED AUGUST 7 AND SPEAKERS ROUNDLY CRITICIZED THE GOVERNMENT. THE RALLY, HOWEVER, BROKE UP IN THE EVENING. DAYTIME-ONLY RALLIES MAY BE A SIGN THAT THE ACTIVISTS DO NOT HAVE THE CONSIDERABLE PUBLIC SUPPORT NECESSARY TO THREATEN THE GOVERNMENT.

5. OUR POLITICAL ASSISTANT WHO VISITED THE SIENE OF THE DEMONSTRATION AUGUST 8 SAID THAT THE RALLY ATTRACTED 6,000 TO 7,000 PERSONS, INCLUDING SOME VOCATIONAL STUDENTS. THIS IS FEWER THAN ON PREVIOUS DAYS. HE HAD PREVIOUSLY SPOKEN TO THE SECRETARY TO THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR WHO SAID THAT THE THAMMASAT RALLY HAD BEGUN TO BREAK UP. THE SECRETARY ALSO SAID THAT REPORTS FROM THE PROVINCES INDICATE THAT RALLIES SYMPATHETIC TO THE THAMMASAT VENTURE WERE DISPERSING AND THAT LOCAL TOWNS-PEOPLE IN CHIANG MAI WERE TALKING ABOUT A COUNTERDEMONSTRATION.

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6. COMMENT: THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT SEEMS TO HAVE DONE A GOOD JOB IN COUNTERING THE CHARGES COMING FROM THE THAMMASAT RALLY AND PRESENTING ITS CASE TO THE PUBLIC. THE GOVERNMENT HAS DECLARED NEITHER A STATE OF EMERGENCY NOR MARTIAL LAW. THE KHUKRIT CABINET IN QUITE CONFIDENT THAT IT IS IN CONTROL OF THE SITUATION.
WHITEHOUSE

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